DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 153 323 EA 010 504

AUTHOR	Gemmet, Richard
TITLE	A Monograph on Interpersonal Communications.
INSTITUTION	San Mateo County Superintendent of Schools, Redwood City, Calif.
PUB DATE	Oct 77
NOTE	48p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Richard Gemmet, San Mateo County Office of Education, 333 Main Street, Redwood City, California 94063 ($2.00; make checks payable to County School Service Fund)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.83 HC-$2.06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Administrative Personnel; Communication (Thought Transfer); *Communication Skills; Elementary Secondary Education; Feedback; *Interpersonal Competence; *Interpersonal Relationship; *Listening Skills; *Speaking; Speech Communication; *Speech Skills

ABSTRACT

Intended for use by managers, this guide is meant to focus attention on communication skills and to provide a new approach to improving interpersonal communications. The authors divide these skills into two categories--listening and speaking. Effective listening entails skillful use of paraphrasing (any method of showing the speaker what his or her idea or statement conveys) and perception checking (a process describing the listener's perceptions of the speaker's feelings). Effective speaking necessitates describing feelings and behavior, using constructive confrontation, and giving and receiving feedback. Exercises are appended that are intended to give the reader opportunity to practice these skills. (Author/DS)

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interpersonal communications

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A MONOGRAPH

ON

INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS

by

Richard Gemmet

Curricular/Pupil Personnel Services Program

333 Main Street, Redwood City, CA 94063

October, 1977

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"Real communication occurs . . . when we listen with understanding. What does that mean? It means to see the expressed idea and attitude from the other person's point of view, to sense how it feels to him, to achieve his frame of reference in regard to the thing he is talking about."

Carl Rogers

"Barriers and Gateways to Communication"
Harvard Business Review, July – August, 1952

I don't want to listen to just what you say,
I want to feel what you mean.

If a man takes off his sunglasses, I can hear
him better.

For communication to have meaning, it must
have a life. It must transcend 'you and me'
and become 'us' . . . In a small way we then
grow out of our old selves and become something new.

From *Notes To Myself*

Hugh Prather

INTRODUCTION

Communication is an integral part of life. We use communication skills daily, and yet often take them for granted. This monograph will attempt to refocus the reader's attention on these skills; and, hopefully, give a new approach to developing and improving these skills in interpersonal communications.

For the educational managers, there have been several important studies in management styles which link the findings of behavioral scientists with management styles. The studies stress the need for the manager to develop interpersonal skills, especially listening and feedback skills.

Douglas McGregor (School of Industrial Management, MIT) developed a management rationale for a dichotomy based upon certain assumptions about people. He called the two positions of this dichotomy, Theory X and Theory Y. Theory Y assumes a very humanistic approach which encourages open communication; an open problem-solving atmosphere; and an interdisciplinary, organic structure with considerable involvement of staff.

Rensis Likert (Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan) developed a profile of organizational and performance characteristics. He identified four management systems based on these characteristics. One of these he labelled System 4. It is characterized as an open, participative system. Likert's research has shown that this system makes significantly better use of human resources and enhances the effectiveness of the organization more than the other three systems.

In short, there is a movement in management, both in industry and in education, which encourages staff involvement, group process, consensus decision-making, open communication (vertical and horizontal), and a series of new skills for the administrator. This monograph will focus on one of those skills – communication – in an effort to increase the competency of managers in dealing more humanely **and** more effectively in their jobs. The humanistic values upon which we base our assumptions not only resonate with an increasing number of people, but are also highly consistent with recent research on the effective functioning of orgainizations.

INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNICATION SKILLS – Listening

PART I

- Communication skills permeate your life and, no doubt, everyone capable of reading this has developed these skills. We are assuming that you are probably a very capable communicator and hope that this monograph will refocus your attention on these often overlooked skills. Interpersonal communication, like many other endeavors, very seldom reaches perfection and only by continually increasing our awareness can we begin to develop our interpersonal communication potential.

- Like the other aspects of your life, the use of communication skills depends on your personality and personal style. We want to encourage you to incorporate the skills we discuss here into your own personal style so that they become a part of you and not a "tacked on" addition. It is also important to recognize how personal style affects the showing of certain emotions, such as trust, affection, and anger.

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- Probably the greatest component in any communication exchange is sincerity. If you use communication skills to manipulate another person, that person usually sees through the facade and often responds with statements like " . . . stop playing those communication games" or " . . . would you please stop trying to interpret and just listen!" These are typical responses to manipulation.

- Building the skills necessary for effective communication takes energy and time. In the beginning, you may want to consciously choose the people and/or situation where you will practice your skills. It is most helpful to have someone who is also interested in developing these skills (your spouse, one of your team members, a friend, etc.) to work with you. There will be some exercises, but the real exercise comes in dialogue with a sympathetic partner. You will find the beginning a little artificial, but soon you will develop your own style and feel quite comfortable. Try to always be conscious of two things: the <u>attitude</u> of wanting to listen and the <u>skills</u> to help you express that attitude.

- Remember, developing effective communication skills takes time; be patient with yourself and, when the skills seem to fail you, rely on your sincere attitude and your own good judgment.

The first two Skills involve effective listening; the last two deal with effective speaking.

A. Listening

Effective communication between people depends on several key ingredients. One of these is the art of listening. In his book, JAZZ COUNTRY, Nat Hentoff describes how a blind musician named Big Charlie taught him about the art of listening.

> "Big Charlie and I walked a few blocks until we came to a street of bars, poolrooms, cafes and a dance hall. 'I want you to watch and listen," said Big Charlie, 'and try to remember everything . . .' "
>
> "Big Charlie would hear a voice and then point out men and women . . . He talked to all of them, drew them out, asked them how they were doing, what was bugging them . . ."
>
> "(Later) Charlie asked me to describe the people I'd met . . . (to) tell (him) what each of them was like . . . (but) when I was through, he shook his head."
>
> "Wrong. Most of the time wrong."
>
> "The man you said was probably a (mean guy) is one of the most sweet men in this whole city . . . Sure, he hollers and roars, but that shows how much life he has in him. If he feels rotten inside, he gets it out of him fast, so nothing backs up in him.
>
> "And the most dangerous man you met all night was that whispering man with the big words. Didn't you hear how flat he spoke?" . . . He's got no faith left in himself . . . and not feeling good about himself, he ain't about to do anybody any good."
>
> "You're a musician . . . and a musician has to listen so that you'll keep learning more things to say in your music . . ."
>
> "A traveling musician's going to be alone in strange towns most of the time, and you got to know who to trust and who not to trust. And you trust those people with the most life in them."
>
> "You can tell by listening underneath what they say. By the pitch of their voices, by how they laugh, by how they listen to you and what they ask you."
>
> "There's a lot of ways. The main thing is to always listen."

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Few of us listen with the sensitivity of Big Charlie. His listening skills are exceptionally developed. For all of us, listening plays an important part in our ability to communicate - to expand our horizons beyond our personal experiences. When we listen to people, we not only receive a message, we analyze it, and often respond to it. Our response becomes a new message; thus, the role of speaker and listener constantly changes.

There are several skills that can help you to be a better listener. The first group of skills enable you to communicate your <u>interest</u> in other people and your <u>willingness</u> to listen to them. Many of these skills are forms of non-verbal communication, such as eye contact, attentiveness, use of hands, facial expressions, and tone of voice. The tone of voice can also affect the meaning of a verbal message. Identical words, spoken by the same person, can communicate quite different things. Obviously, it takes more than these techniques to be a sincere listener. Most important, as we have mentioned, is a genuine interest in others, in finding out about their experiences, ideas and feelings.

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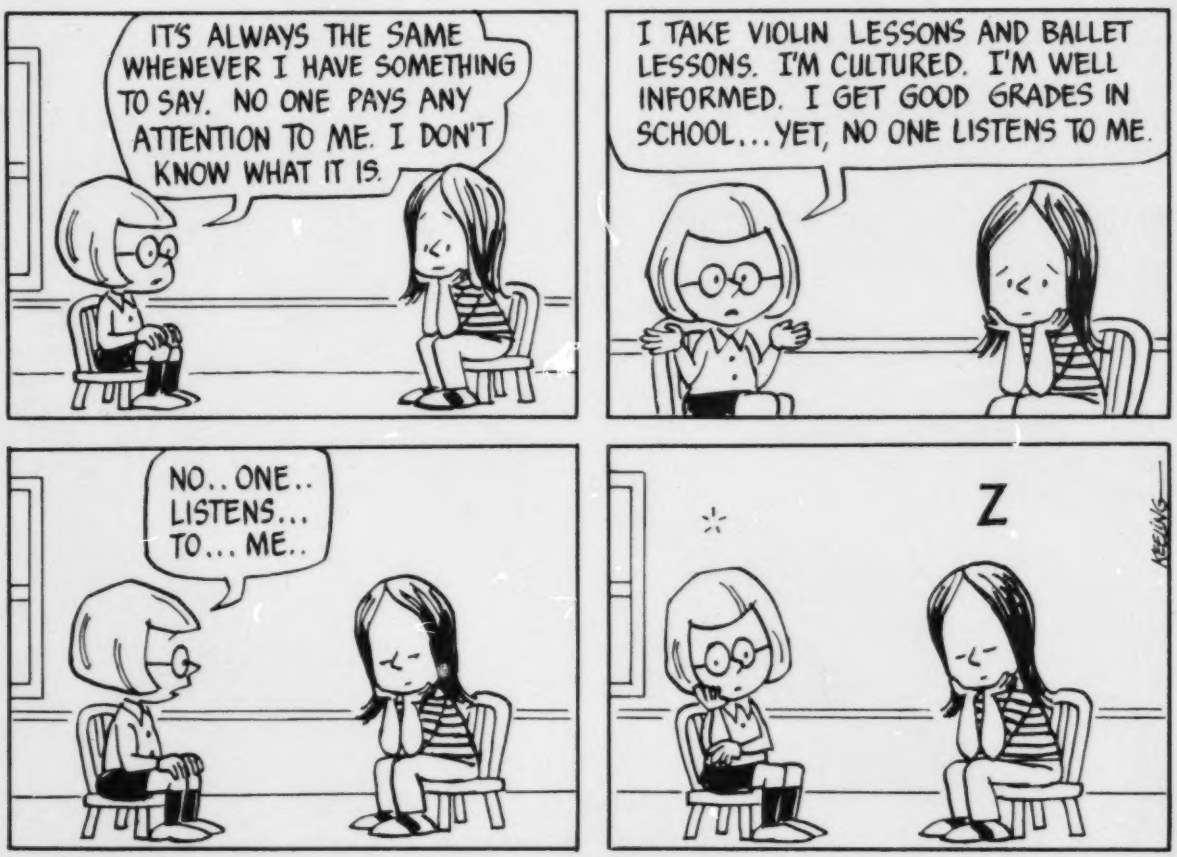
IT'S ALWAYS THE SAME WHENEVER I HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY. NO ONE PAYS ANY ATTENTION TO ME. I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS.
I TAKE VIOLIN LESSONS AND BALLET LESSONS. I'M CULTURED. I'M WELL INFORMED. I GET GOOD GRADES IN SCHOOL... YET, NO ONE LISTENS TO ME.
NO.. ONE.. LISTENS... TO... ME..
Z
KEEFE

Sincere listeners focus their attention outside themselves. They concentrate on someone else. They try to understand all levels of the message coming in. Some elements of effective listening are quite obvious, if we take the time to think about them.

1. Don't interrupt. Instead, hear the speaker out until (s)he feels (s)he has conveyed the message.
2. Don't judge. Instead, be willing to accept another's point of view.
3. Reflect. Often you need a few moments to think about what you heard before you respond.

Checking back with the speaker - paraphrasing what (s)he has said to make sure you understand it - can also help to avoid misunderstanding. Until we have clarified complex or highly emotional messages, we cannot possibly make a meaningful response. And response is what makes conversation a two-person affair. It shows involvement with others, a willingness to share their hopes, understand their problems, and accept their feelings.

B. The Skill of Paraphrasing 7

Any communication exchange can be broken down into the following elements:

Senders have a thought, some information, and/or instructions which they wish to communicate to the receiver. The sender then encodes the message by putting it in a form that the receiver will hopefully understand. The encoding process is rather complex and involves one's own perception of the message, the meaning of specific words, and the values of the sender.

The receiver must decode the message to understand it. The receiver asks, and answers, the question, "What does this message mean?" The decoding process attempts to reconstruct the message intended by the sender.

As you can imagine, and as you have probably experienced, the message of the sender and the message understood by the receiver are not always the same. Thus, the need to clarify the message. But, in addition to the verbal message, there is often a "feeling" message attached to the verbal message. This "feeling" message may be the real message or may intensify the verbal message.

An example of a "feeling" message may be a man saying, "Joe, you old devil!" Here, the verbal part is not the real message. The intended message may have been, "Joe, it's great to see you again", and this is usually understood by the receiver.

HERE, HAVE A PIECE OF CANDY.
WOW! THIS IS FANTASTIC! I'VE NEVER SEEN SUCH GENEROSITY. ONE WHOLE PIECE OF CANDY! CHOCK FULL OF NUTS AND RICH CREAMY CHOCOLATE! WOW!
I DON'T KNOW WHETHER I SHOULD GORGE MYSELF ON THIS ALONE OR INVITE MY FRIENDS OVER TO HELP ME EAT IT.
I GET THE FEELING HE PERHAPS EXPECTED A BIGGER PIECE.

In hearing the verbal message, the receiver often can't be certain (s)he understands the intended message of the sender. Of course, you can get the other person to clarify the remark by asking, "What do you mean?" or "Tell me more," or by saying, "I don't understand." However, after the message has been restated, you still face the same question: "Am I understanding the idea as the sender intended it to be understood?" Your feeling of certainty is no evidence that you do, in fact, understand.

If you state in your own way what the remark conveys to you, the sender can begin to determine whether the message is coming through as intended. Then, if there is some misunderstanding, the sender can speak directly to the specific misunderstanding you have revealed. The term PARAPHRASE can be used for any METHOD OF SHOWING THE OTHER PERSON WHAT THE IDEA OR SUGGESTION CONVEYS TO YOU. Paraphrasing is any manner of revealing your understanding of the other person's comment in order to test your comprehension.

C. Learning to Paraphrase*

People sometimes think of paraphrasing as merely putting the other person's ideas in another way. They try to say the same thing with different words. Such word-swapping may result merely in the illusion of mutual understanding. For example:

Sarah: Jim should never have become a teacher.

Fred: You mean teaching isn't the right job for him?

Sarah: Exactly! Teaching is not the right job for Jim.

Instead of trying to reword Sarah's statement, Fred might have asked himself, "What does Sarah's statement mean to me?" In that case, the interchange might have sounded like this:

Sarah: Jim should never have become a teacher.

Fred: You mean he is too harsh on the children . . . maybe even cruel?

Sarah: Oh, no. I meant that he has such expensive tastes that he can never earn enough as a teacher.

Fred: Oh, I see. You think he should have gone into a field that would have insured him of a higher standard of living?

Sarah: Exactly! Teaching is not the right job for Jim.

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Effective paraphrasing is not a trick or a verbal gimmick. It comes from an attitude, a desire to know what the other means. In order to satisfy this desire, you reveal the meaning the comment had for you so that the other person can verify whether the intended meaning was conveyed.

In some instances, a general statement may convey something specific to you. For example:

Larry: I think this is a very poor textbook.

You: Poor? You mean it has too many inaccuracies?

Larry: No, the text is accurate, but the book comes apart too easily.

Possibly the other's comment suggests an example to you:

Laura: This text has too many omissions; we shouldn't adopt it.

You: Do you mean, for example, that it contains nothing about the minorities' role in the development of America?

Laura: Yes, that's one example. It also lacks any discussion of the development of the arts in America.

---

*From materials developed by John Wallen, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, Portland, Oregon, 1972. (paraphrasing and perception checks)

If the speaker's comment was very specific, it may convey a more general idea to you.

Ralph: Do you have 25 pencils I can borrow for my class?

You: Do you just want something for them to write with? I have about 15 ballpoint pens and 10 or 11 pencils.

Ralph: Great. Anything which writes will do.

Sometimes the other's idea will suggest its inverse or opposite to you.

Stanley: I think the Teachers' Union acts so irresponsibly because the administration has ignored them so long.

You: Do you mean that T.U. would be less militant now if the administration had consulted with them in the past?

Stanley: Certainly. I think the T.U. is being forced to more and more desperate measures.

Some persons have difficulty learning to paraphrase because they view the task as a kind of mind reading. They believe they are expected to articulate what the other person is thinking. Of course, they feel inadequate to such a task. However, the task is a simple one if you remember that you are trying to reveal what the other's comment means to you. Your paraphrase is not at attempt to prove that you can read the other's thoughts, but to let the sender know what meaning you get from the statement. As a matter of fact, if your paraphrase turns out to be quite different from that which is intended, you will often find that it elicits important additional information. Sometimes it is helpful to make a paraphrase which you anticipate will almost certainly be wide of that which is intended. As the speaker gives additional clarification, both of you gain a clearer conception of the point. Your wide paraphrase helps the speaker to clarify his/her understanding of the point. There are other examples in the article in the Appendix.

It is also appropriate and helpful to ask other persons to paraphrase if you are not sure that they understand what you have just said. Many speakers mistake silence, or even nodding and "um-hum", as signals for both listening and accurate understanding of what they are trying to communicate, when in fact, neither has occurred.

There are two additional benefits to paraphrasing. First, it shows the sender you really are interested in what they have to say, and that very process is a personal acceptance of them. A person will find it easier to clarify or reinforce statements if they sense a receptive listener. The second benefit is that it sets a tone which is conducive toward shared understanding. One who is listened to will be more inclined to be a good listener as the roles switch back and forth.

D. Skill of Perception Checking

As we have noted, there is often a second part of the message, namely, the "feeling" part. Some messages have a feeling level often expressed by tone, gesture, facial expression and other non-verbal cues. This sometimes is contradictory to the verbal message which causes the receiver to decode two messages, but most of the time it is complimentary to the message. As a general rule, always work on the "feeling" message first. It clears the air and sets a base of mutual understanding for dealing with the verbal message.

To deal with the "feeling" level, describe what you perceive to be the other's inner state in order to verify that you understand what emotions are present. That is, you test to see whether you have decoded the expressions of "feeling" accurately. You transform <u>expressions</u> of feeling into a tentative <u>description</u> of the other's feeling. A good perception check conveys this message, "I want to understand your feelings - is this (making a description of the feelings expressed) the way you feel?" 11

Examples:

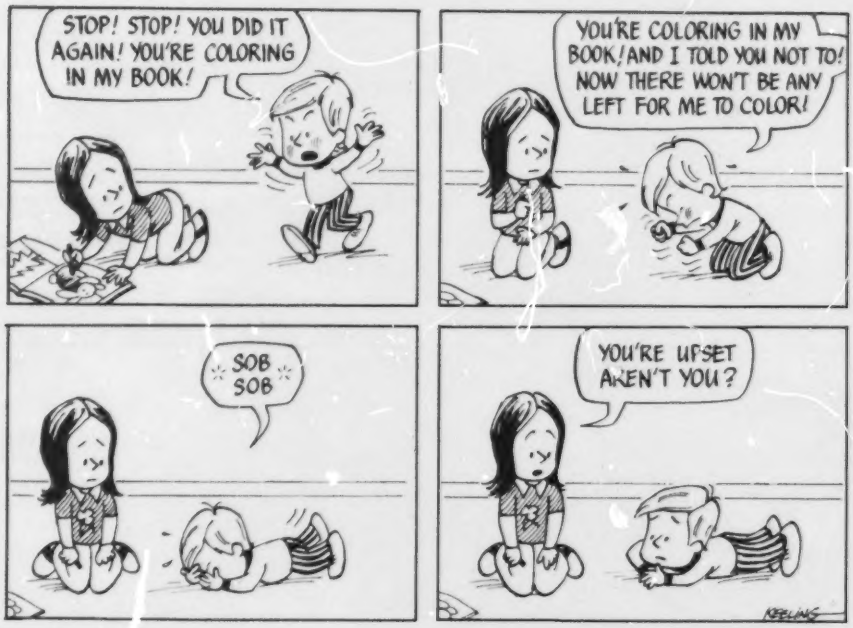
"I get the impression you are angry with me. Are you?"

(NOT: "Why are you so angry with me?" This is mind reading, not perception checking.)

"Am I right that you feel disappointed that nobody commented on your suggestion?"

"I'm not sure whether your expression means that my comment hurt your feelings, irritated or confused you."

Note that a perception check <u>describes</u> the other's feelings, and <u>does not express disapproval or approval</u>. It merely conveys, "This is how I understand your feelings. Am I accurate?"


STOP! STOP! YOU DID IT AGAIN! YOU'RE COLORING IN MY BOOK!
YOU'RE COLORING IN MY BOOK! AND I TOLD YOU NOT TO! NOW THERE WON'T BE ANY LEFT FOR ME TO COLOR!
SOB SOB
YOU'RE UPSET AREN'T YOU?

E. When To Use a Skill Like Paraphrasing

Although most people paraphrase far too infrequently, it is possible to overdo it. If you paraphrase almost everything a speaker says, they
12 may become annoyed at your unwillingness to assume your comprehension of simple, obvious points. Or they may begin to suspect that you are trying to interpret the words or to suggest what they should mean.

If you paraphrase continually, others may see it as your way of avoiding revealing your own opinions. They become the only ones sharing ideas and exposing opinions; you merely paraphrase. At first, others may interpret your responses as indicating attentive listening and respond favorably to your interest. Gradually, however, they become aware that, while you are learning much about them, they are learning little about you. They begin to feel vulnerable, then distrusting and resentful of you.

Frequent paraphrasing seems especially appropriate to two general conditions. (1) When mistakes could be costly, accuracy of communication becomes more important. To assume understanding rather than checking it out under such a condition is to risk possibly serious consequences. (2) Strong feelings in the sender and/or the receiver increase the probability that comments will be misunderstood, because they can distort or obscure parts of the message. In such cases, paraphrasing becomes crucial as a way of insuring that the message comes through as intended. The next time someone is angry

with you or you are angry with them, try paraphrasing what they say until they agree that you understand the point. Note what effect this has on the other persons' feelings, as well as on your own.

Paraphrasing and perception checks are valuable skills, but one must remember the key to good listening is sincerity. Perhaps the real key to effective use of the skills is to listen with empathy. Empathy is essentially putting yourself in someone else's place and this type of response is the most effective in meaningful conversations. It makes it easier for the speaker to cope with personal feelings. The speaker becomes more secure, knowing the listener accepts and understands these feelings. An empathetic response avoids judgments and criticisms. "How do I feel?" becomes, instead, "If I were you, how would I feel?"

Empathy depends, in part, on past experiences -- memories of similar situations stored away in our minds. But even without these experiences, you can learn to empathize. Just pay attention to the speaker's emotions. Once you identify them, you will probably remember times you felt that way yourself.

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When you can share these feelings, you'll be a better listener. You will know your friends and yourself more fully, and you'll get more satisfaction from your personal relationships. The next part of the monograph will help you in expressing these feelings.

"If I could be you and you could be me
For just one hour
If we could find a way to get inside each other's mind,
If you could see you through my eyes
Instead of your ego,
I believe you'd be surprised to see
That you'd been blind.
Walk a mile in my shoes,
Walk a mile in my shoes,
And before you abuse, criticize and accuse,
Walk a mile in my shoes."

WALK A MILE IN MY SHOES, composed by Joe South

EVALUATING YOUR LISTENING HABITS

In evaluating some of your major listening habits, the following scale will be helpful. In constructing the scale, it has been assumed that most of your information is received through your eyes and ears.

When in a LISTENING situation, do you:	CHECK ONE Almost Always	Occasionally	Seldom
1. Place yourself in a physical position of facing the speaker and close enough for you to hear?	_____	_____	_____
2. Find yourself while listening with time to think of other activities?	_____	_____	_____
3. Add the dimension of watching for non-verbal behavior, gestures, etc., to gain deeper understanding?	_____	_____	_____
4. Rehearse your answer while (s)he is still talking?	_____	_____	_____
5. Determine your own bias, values, etc., which may become filters that will distort what is being said?	_____	_____	_____
6. Interrupt or 'jump in' when you feel (s)he is wrong or you see a chance 'to score'?	_____	_____	_____
7. Look for the basic assumptions underlying the remarks?	_____	_____	_____
8. Tune out and begin a silent combat because of 'red flag' words you hear?	_____	_____	_____
9. Listen to the feelings expressed so as to better understand the comments?	_____	_____	_____
10. Feel an inner pressure to have the last word?	_____	_____	_____

The best answers are:

"Seldom" for even numbered questions

"Almost Always" for odd numbered questions

Adapted from: H.S. Hayward, 1967

PARAPHRASING

Paraphrasing is any means of showing the other person what his/her idea or suggestions means to you.

The article in the appendix presents five approaches to make paraphrasing "flow" without sounding stilted. Read the article for some helpful techniques.

PRACTICE: Besides practicing with your partner, try at least once each day to actively listen using paraphrasing and/or a perception check. Evaluate the results, for you as well as for your listener.

The art of listening comes with practice; be patient.

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PART II

The next two skills involve effective speaking. Meaningful communication requires that both parties are effective speakers, as well as effective listeners.

Being able to communicate with another person is essential to the development of any kind of relationship. Through talking, we can share with others our unique perceptions about life. We can show other people who we are and how we feel about things. We can ask for help to sort out confusing problems and emotions. When we communicate successfully, we are no longer alone -- we are, instead, truly a part of the human race. Unfortunately, being able to say what we want to say is often difficult - especially if it involves expressing our emotions toward another person.

Often we are more concerned with self-protection, especially protecting ourselves from rejection, so that we frequently are afraid to take risks.

GUESS WHAT, CHERYL? YOU KNOW THAT BOY WITH THE CURLY BROWN HAIR YOU LIKE? TEACHER HAS MADE HIM YOUR PARTNER ON THE GEOGRAPHY PROJECT.
ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS GO OVER AND TALK TO HIM.
I CAN'T..
THIS IS YOUR BIG CHANCE, CHERYL. YOU'VE HAD A CRUSH ON HIM FOR A YEAR. JUST GO OVER THERE AND TALK TO HIM.
I CAN'T!
I SUDDENLY FEEL VERY INSECURE!

We need courage and self-confidence to say what we want to say. For when we talk, we reveal ourselves to the world. If we are able to accept ourselves -- our failings as well as our strong points -- we have little problem communicating. But if we view ourselves negatively, we may see communication as a risk. With acceptance and reassurance from others, especially good listeners, we will begin to develop a sense of self-confidence.

The words we choose to express ourselves are also important. There are many different ways to say something -- and many reasons why we make the choices we do. At times, we use words to hide, rather than share, our feelings. We often are afraid to let people know what's really going on inside us. Dipping into the past for old stories about ourselves is one way of keeping our emotions hidden. What our listeners are interested in is the "here and now" - us, today - the part of our lives that they are sharing. Other times we try to hide our feelings when we're hurt or angry. We tend to talk in generalities, being uncertain that the listener cares how we feel. Communicating our own feelings and understanding the feelings of others is an extremely difficult task. Yet, <u>if we wish others to respond to us on a personal level, we must help them understand how we feel</u>.

A. Describing Feelings

Although we usually try to describe our <u>ideas</u> clearly and accurately, we often do not try to describe our <u>feelings</u> clearly. Feelings are expressed in many different ways, but we do not usually attempt to identify the feeling itself.

One way to describe a feeling is to <u>identify</u> or name it. "I feel angry." "I feel embarrassed." "I feel comfortable with you." However, there are not enough labels to encompass the broad range of human emotions, so we invent other ways to describe our feelings, such as the use of <u>similes</u>. "I feel like a tiny frog in a huge pond."

A third way to describe a feeling is to report what kind of <u>action</u> the feeling urges you to do. "I feel like hugging you." "I'd like to slap you." "I wish I could walk off and leave you."

From materials developed by John Wallen, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, Portland, Oregon, 1972. (Describing Feelings, Describing Behavior).

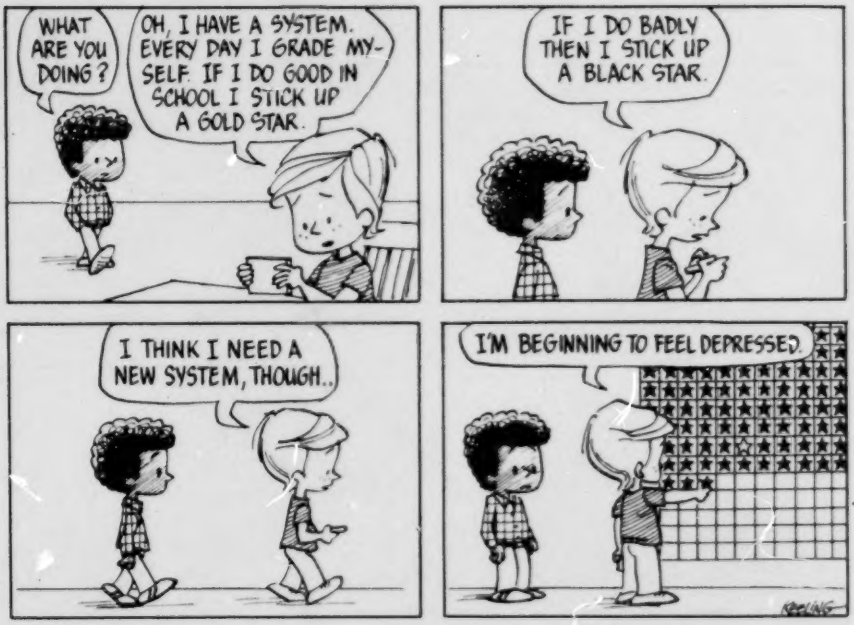
There are also many figures of speech which serve as descriptions of feelings. "I just swallowed a bushel of sunshine."

When describing your feelings, try to make clear what feelings you are experiencing by identifying them. The statement must (1) refer to "I", "me", or "my", and (2) specify some kind of feeling by name, simile, action urge or other figure of speech.

The aim in describing your own feelings is to start a dialogue that will improve your relationship with the other person. After all, others need to know how you feel if they are to take your feelings into account. Negative feelings are indicator signals that something may be going wrong in a relationship with another person. To ignore negative feelings is like ignoring a warning light that indicates an electrical circuit is overloaded. Negative feelings are signals that the two of you need to check for misunderstanding and faulty communication.

Effective communication occurs when communicators take responsibility for their thoughts, feelings and overt behavior - when they "own" what they
18 do. Blaming, imputing motives, claiming that "the devil made you do it" are sneaky, dishonest attempts to be irresponsible. When you own your thoughts and feelings, the other person knows where you are and can respond more authentically to you. You are entitled to have thoughts and feelings in your interpersonal environment. Being aware of them and the differences between them can improve your communications.

Describing your feelings should not be an effort to coerce the other into changing behavior. Rather, you should report your inner state as just one more piece of information that is necessary for the two of you to understand and improve your relationship.


WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
OH, I HAVE A SYSTEM. EVERY DAY I GRADE MYSELF. IF I DO GOOD IN SCHOOL I STICK UP A GOLD STAR.
IF I DO BADLY THEN I STICK UP A BLACK STAR.
I THINK I NEED A NEW SYSTEM, THOUGH..
I'M BEGINNING TO FEEL DEPRESSED.

Describing your feelings is only one part of the information exchange process needed to improve interpersonal communication. Also important is the ability to describe the behavior of another which causes emotional feelings in you.

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B. Description of Behavior

Behavior description means reporting specific, observable actions of others without placing a judgment value on them as being right or wrong, bad or good, and without making accusations or generalizations about the other's motives, attitudes or personality traits.

You try to let others know what behavior you are responding to by describing it clearly and specifically enough so that they know what you observed. To do this you must describe visible evidence -- actions that are open to anyone's observation. Sometimes, for practice, it is helpful to try beginning your description with "I saw that . . ." or "I noticed that . . ." or "I heard you say . . ." to remind yourself that you are trying to describe specific actions.

Example: "Jim, you've talked more than others on this topic. Several times you cut off others before they had finished."

NOT: "Jim, you're too rude!" which names a trait and gives no evidence.

NOT: "Jim, you always want to hog the center of attention!" which imputes an undesirable motive or intention.

Example: "Bob, you've taken the opposite view of nearly everything Harry has suggested today."

NOT: "Bob, you're just trying to show Harry up." which is an accusation of undesirable motivation.

NOT: "Bob, you're being stubborn." which is name calling.

Example: "Sam, you cut in before I had finished."

NOT: "Sam, you deliberately didn't let me finish." The word "deliberately" implies that Sam knowingly and intentionally cut you off. All that anybody can observe is that he did cut in before you had finished.

To develop skill in describing behavior, you must sharpen your observation of what actually did occur. You must force yourself to pay attention to what is observable - to hold judgments in abeyance. As you practice this, you may find that many of your conclusions about others are based less on observable evidence than on your own feelings of affection, insecurity, irritation, jealousy or fear. For example, accusations that attribute undesirable motives to another are usually expressions of the speakers negative feelings toward the other and not descriptions of actual behavior at all.

As we have noted in the first part of this monograph, the key element in using these skills is a basic attitude of sincerity, of wanting to improve the relationship. In describing your feelings and describing another's behavior (giving feedback), you should first consider the other person and the relationship the two of you share. "Telling it like it is", regardless of the person or the situation, is neither helpful nor humane. Only when feedback is beneficial, and when the person is "ready" for the feedback, do these skills become tools to enhance a relationship.

C. Constructive Confrontation (using the skills)

Gerald Egan, in his book, Encounter: Group Processes for Interpersonal Growth, defines confrontation as when one person either deliberately or inadvertantly does something that causes or directs another person to reflect, examine, question or change some aspect of their behavior. Constructive confrontation may be the most difficult interpersonal skill and yet, in any relationship, it is an essential tool for growth.

Too often we wait until our discomfort becomes intense and then in an angry attack or in a sarcastic response we "let loose" our problem. More often than not, this only leads to defensiveness in the other, followed by apologies, and a strained relationship. Most often, no significant change of behavior occurs, only a change in the relationship. The key, then, is to confront the other before you reach your breaking point. The goal is to deal with changeable behaviors and not with character assassination.

When someone close to you, (spouse, friend, co-worker, etc.) is acting in such a way as to cause a negative reaction in you, and that reaction begins to affect the relationship, the confrontation becomes essential to preserve and/or enhance that relationship.

Before embarking on such a mission, we recommend the following criteria be checked. Responding positively to the four criteria will increase the probability that the confrontation and ensuing openness will improve the relationship rather than harm it.

1. Relationship - Openness must stem from a desire to improve your relationship with the other. Confrontation is not an end in itself but a means to an end. When attempting to give an open sharing of reactions to each other, try to convey that this encounter indicates that you value your relationship with the other and wish to improve it because it is important. Be sure to carefully choose time, place and words.

2. Motivation - Aim at creating a shared understanding of your relationship. You wish to know how the other perceives and feels about your actions and you wish the other person to know how you perceive and

From materials developed by John Wallen, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, Portland, Oregon, 1972.

feel about their actions. Thus, each of you will view the relationship from more nearly the same viewpoint.

3. Risk - Recognize that confrontation involves risk-taking. You cannot receive a maximum guarantee with a minimum risk. Your willingness to risk your self-image, being rejected or hurt by another, depends upon the importance of the relationship to you. Likewise, you cannot ask that others guarantee not to become angry or feel hurt by your comments. The important point is that you are willing to risk their being themselves - whatever they feel - in the effort to make the encounter a learning experience for all.

4. Change - Although the discussion may become intense, spirited, angry or tearful, it should be noncoercive and not an attempt to get the other to change. Each should use the information as they see fit. The attitude should not be "who's wrong and who's right?" but "what can each of us learn from this discussion that will make our working together more productive and more satisfying?"

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As a result of the discussion, one, both or neither of you may act differently in the future. Each, however, will act with fuller awareness of the effect of their actions on the other, as well as with more understanding of the other's intentions. Any change brought about will be self-chosen, rather than an effort to placate or submit to the other.

How to give a Constructive Confrontation

Having reviewed the criteria the following components are suggested. The most effective confrontation will include warm up statements, possibly some positive feedback, etc., and always takes a paragraph rather than a sentence.

1. Ownership - The use of "I" or "we" to the response is essential. It is not effective to be a third party confronter. Phrases like "all of your friends feel . . ." or "It's not me, but several others think . . ." are basicly deceptive. The receiver of such a statement can legitmately ask to meet with those people so he can really hear what their problem is. We feel if your not ready to "own" that the others' behavior is affecting you, your not ready to confront.

2. Linking - The second component is one of linking with the other in such a way as to promote understanding and empathy. Feelings are the common base of all humanity. No doubt the confrontee has at one time experienced the same emotion as you are feeling. By describing your feelings you "link" with the other so they are less defensive, more empathetic, and most of the time, willing to help you. These first two components deal with you and your feelings, only then should you deal with the other's behavior.

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3. Description of behavior - No doubt a difficult task as we have seen, is to state what the other is doing in observable and non-judgemental terms. But this is essential to keep defensiveness to a minimum, limit our feedback to specific actions and provide a workable amount of feedback. Name calling, judgemental descriptions, etc., all tend to cast an impression of a warped character which the other has no choice but to fight back, to prove you wrong, or show your limitations to counteract your implications. When you deal in observable behavior in non-judgemental terms you greatly increase your chances that the other will be able to "hear" your comment.

4. Effect on you - If you haven't already included this in your expression of feelings you may want to put it here. Besides the feelings evoked, the other is probably having some effect on your actions. You may be unable to complete a report, do part of your job, or creatively share ideas because of someone's behavior. It will help put the whole confrontation in perspective if you can show how you're being affected by such behavior.

Here are some examples using the four components:

- "When you two talk while I'm trying to watch television, I feel frustrated because I can't hear the program."
- "I really like it when you look at me while I'm talking. It makes me feel like I'm with friends who are interested."
- "This is the third time I've had to stop this class because of conversations going on in the back of the room. I'm beginning to feel really annoyed because I can't keep my trend of thought. Maybe we had better talk about this and develop some group norms."

Confrontation is a difficult but powerful tool in interpersonal relationships. Carefully done, it enhances relationships, creates a positive climate, and
24 provides an atmosphere which allows an open communication flow. At the very least the relationship should remain about the same, but each will be acting with an increased awareness.

As we have noted, the confrontation may or may not change behavior but it almost always leads smoothly into a problem solving session. If the confronter presents his/her case and the confrontee responds with a different perspective then the discussion becomes one of how do we solve this dilemma. The end result may mean both change, neither changes or one will change. The change will be based on the relationship and on the problem as stated and not happen because one person imposes their will or their values on another. This mutual problem solving is a relationship-enhancer especially when based on a "win-win" solution so both parties feel the solution is acceptable.

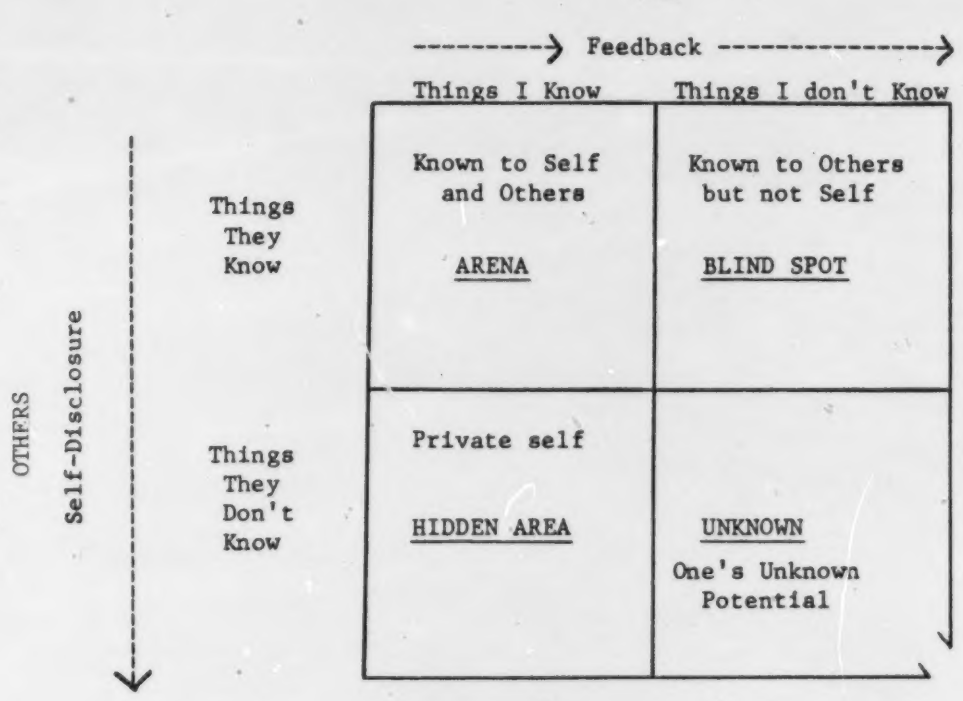
It seems appropriate to mention here the power of positive feedback. We feel reinforcing positive behavior is more effective in promoting change than is confronting negative behavior. In those circumstances where you feel uncomfortable confronting negative behavior begin watching and reinforcing positive behavior. We all have a tendency to repeat actions which get us

"strokes". Positive feedback using observable behavior and an expression of your feelings, when possible, is a powerful interpersonal tool that is both gentle and humane. It provides the other with information about the effect of their behavior on you, just as confrontation does.

As we have seen, feedback, either positive or confrontative contains some risk because you expose to the other, your feelings and, in a sense, your vulnerability. The following model provides a way to balance out the information given and the information received.

D. Johari Window

The process of giving and receiving feedback can be illustrated through a model called the Johari Window. The window was originally developed by two psychologists, Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham, for their program in group process. The model can be looked upon as a communication window through which you give and receive information about yourself and others.



The first pane, called the Arena, contains things that you and others know about you. It is an area characterized by free and open exchange of information. The information here is public and available to everyone. The Arena increases in size as the level of trust increases between individuals and more information, particularly personally relevant information, is shared.

The second pane, the Blind Spot, contains information that you do not know about yourself, but of which others may know. As you begin to participate in dialogue, you communicate all kinds of information of which you are not aware, but which is being picked up by other people. This information may be in the form of verbal cues, mannerisms, the way you say things, or the style in which you relate to others. The extent to which you are insensitive

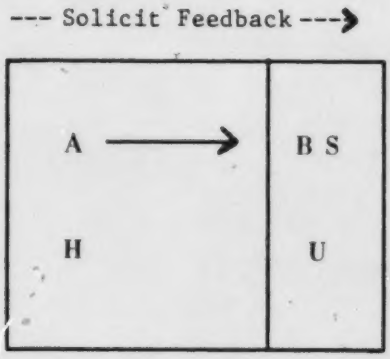
to much of your own behavior and what it may communicate to others can be both surprising and disconcerting.

In the "Hidden Area" are the secrets that you know about yourself but of which others are unaware. For one reason or another, you keep this information hidden. You may fear that if others know of your feelings, perceptions and opinions, they may reject, attack or hurt you in some way. As a result, you conceal some information. Another reason you may keep this information to yourself is that you do not see the supportive elements in others which you need to feel secure. You assume that, if you start revealing your feelings, thoughts and reactions, others may react negatively. But you will never learn the validity of your assumptions unless you test them and reveal something of yourself to others. This pane is also called the "Facade".

The last pane, the "Unknown", is filled with qualities that neither you nor others know about you. Some of this material may be so far beneath the surface that you may never become aware of it. Other qualities, however, may be just below the surface of awareness and can become known through a communication exchange. This area may represent such things as intrapersonal dynamics, early childhood memories, latent potentialities and unrecognized resources.

One goal you may set for yourself is to decrease the size of your Blind Spot, i.e., move the vertical line to the right. Since this area contains information that others know about you but of which you are unaware, the only way to increase your awareness is to receive feedback. As a consequence, you need to develop a receptive attitude to encourage feedback. That is, you need to actively solicit information in such a way that another will feel comfortable in giving it to you. The more you do this, the more the vertical line will move to the right.

Constructive confrontation usually gives you information about yourself from anothers' perspective and thus helps you move your vertical line.



Another goal you may set for yourself, in terms of our model, is to reduce your Hidden Area, i.e., move the horizontal line down. Since this area contains information that you have been keeping from others, you can reduce it by opening the communication lines to another concerning your reactions to what is going on in the relationship and inside you. In this instance, you are giving feedback, or disclosing yourself, in terms of your perceptions, feelings and opinions. Through this process, others know where you stand, and do not need to guess at or interpret what your behavior means. The more self-disclosure and feedback you give, the farther down you push the horizontal line.

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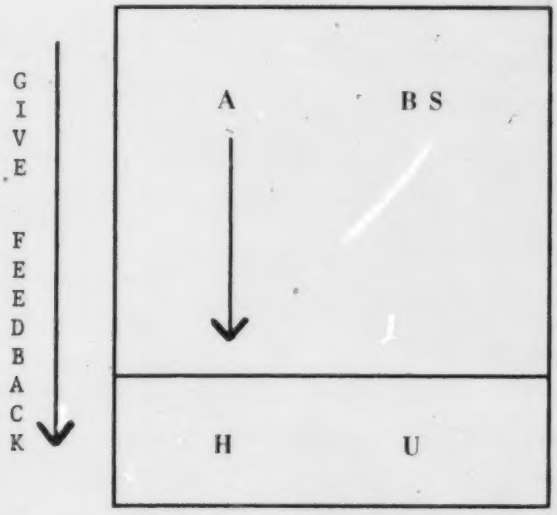

You will notice that, while you are reducing your Blind Spot and Hidden Area through the process of giving and soliciting feedback, you are, at the same time, increasing the size of your Arena or public area.

In the process of giving and asking for feedback, some people tend to do much more of one than the other, thereby creating an imbalance of these two behaviors. This imbalance may have consequences in terms of the individual's effectiveness and the reactions of another. The size and shape of the Arena, therefore, is a result of both the amount of feedback shared and the ratio of giving-versus-soliciting feedback.

Additionally, through the process of giving and receiving feedback, new information can move from the Unknown into the Arena. You may have an "aha" experience when you suddenly perceive a relationship between a here-and-now transaction and some previous event. Movement of information from the Unknown into the Arena can be called "insight" or "inspiration".

It is not an easy task to give feedback in such a way that it can be received without threat to the other person. This technique requires practice in developing sensitivity to other's needs and in being able to put oneself in another's shoes. As the acceptance of others increases, the need to give feedback which can be construed as evaluative or judgmental decreases.

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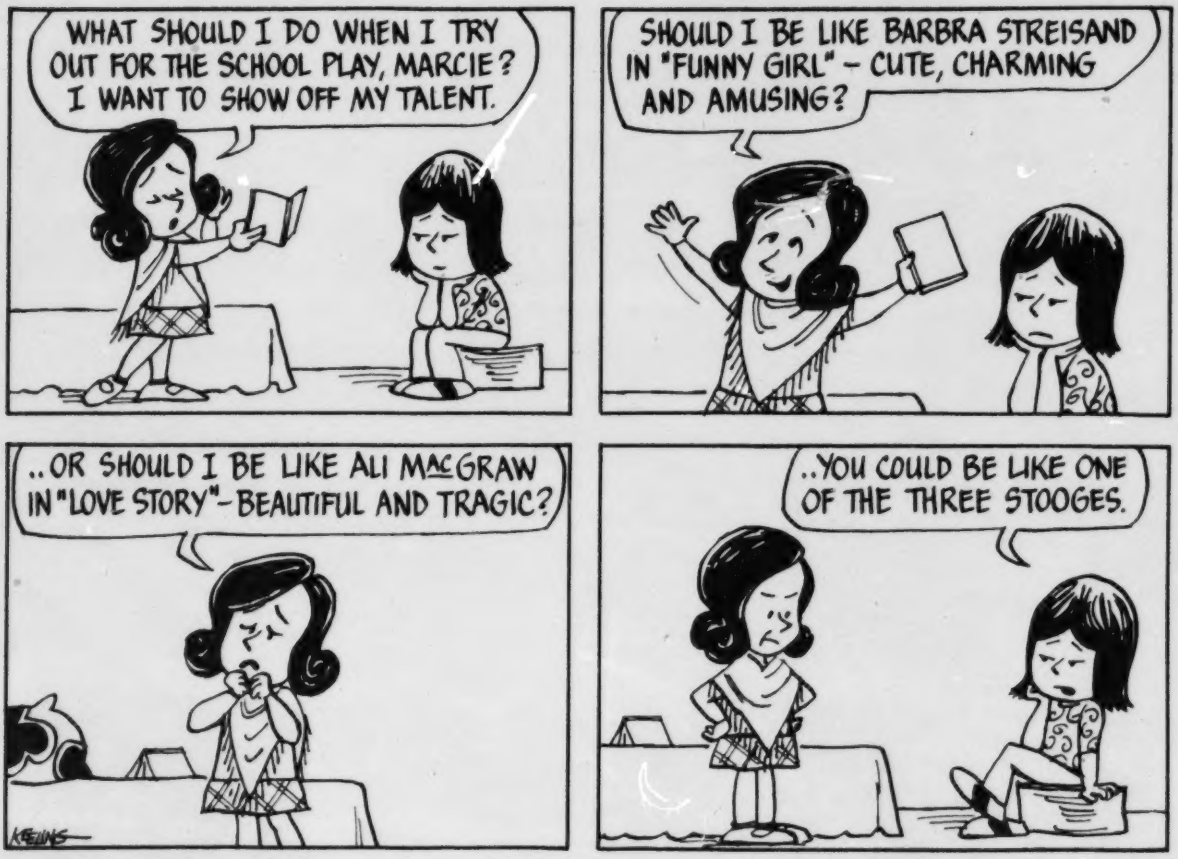
WHAT SHOULD I DO WHEN I TRY OUT FOR THE SCHOOL PLAY, MARCIE? I WANT TO SHOW OFF MY TALENT.
SHOULD I BE LIKE BARBRA STREISAND IN "FUNNY GIRL" - CUTE, CHARMING AND AMUSING?
..OR SHOULD I BE LIKE ALI MacGRAW IN "LOVE STORY" - BEAUTIFUL AND TRAGIC?
..YOU COULD BE LIKE ONE OF THE THREE STOOGES.
KEEFE

E. Guidelines for Giving and Receiving Feedback

A number of guidelines can help you make the giving of feedback effective. These are only guidelines -- not rules. There may be exceptions to each one. Don't think of these guidelines as the only way to do it. Think, rather, of whether "the usual guidelines" apply in this particular instance.

- Readiness of the Receiver - Give the feedback only when there are clear indications that the receiver is ready to be made aware of it. If not ready, the receiver will be apt not to hear it or to misinterpret it.
- Descriptive Not Interpretive - Giving feedback should be like acting as a "candid camera". It is a clear report of the facts, rather than your ideas about why things happened or what was meant by them. It is up to the receiver to consider the whys or the meanings or to invite the feedback giver to share in this considering process.
- Recent Happenings - The closer the feedback is given to the time the event takes place the better. When feedback is given immediately, the receiver is most apt to be clear on exactly what is meant. The feelings associated with the event still exist so that this, too, can be part of understanding what the feedback means.
- Appropriate Times - Feedback should be given when there is a good chance it can be used helpfully. It may not be helpful if the receiver feels there is currently other work that demands more attention. Or, critical feedback in front of others may be seen as damaging rather than helpful.
- New Information - There is a tendency in giving feedback to say only the obvious. Consider whether the action or words you are reacting to may really be new information for the receiver. Many times, the thing which may be helpful new information is not simply a report of what you saw the receiver doing, but rather the way it caused you to feel or the situation you felt it placed you in.
- Changeable Things - Feedback can lead to improvements only when it is about actions, statements, attitudes which can be changed.

- Is Not An Overload - When learning how to give feedback, we sometimes tend to overdo it. It's as though we were telling the receiver, "I just happen to have a list of reactions here and, if you'll settle back for a few hours, I'll read them off to you". The receiver replies, "Wait a minute. I'd prefer you gave them to me one at a time at moments when I can really work on them. I can't handle a long list all at once."
- Is Given to Be Helpful - You should always consider your reasons for giving your reactions. Are you trying to be helpful to the receiver? Or, are you just getting rid of some of your own feelings, or using the occasion to try to get the receiver to do something that would be helpful for you? If you are doing more than trying to help the receiver with feedback, you should share your additional reasons so (s)he will know better how to understand what you are saying.

In receiving feedback, the following may be helpful:

- State What You Want Feedback About - Let the giver know specific actions or statements about which you would welcome his/her reactions. 31
- Check What You Have Heard - Check to be sure that you understand what the giver is trying to say. Because the topic is your own behavior, you may tend to move toward thinking about the meanings of the feedback before you are sure you are hearing it as it was intended.
- Share Your Reactions to the Feedback - Your own feelings may become so involved that you forget to share your reactions with the giver. If (s)he goes off without knowing whether the feedback has been helpful and how you feel now, (s)he may be less apt to give you feedback in the future. The giver needs your reactions about what was helpful and what was not so as to know that the feedback was useful.

It's important to emphasize that the aim in using these two skills is the enhancement of an interpersonal relationship. The more the other person knows about your values, feelings, attitudes, the better your interaction will be. It's also important to review periodically the guidelines for constructive openness and giving feedback.

The exercises following the summary may help you in evaluating your own Johari Window with people you're close to, as well as help you in developing skills of describing your feelings and describing behavior.

F. Summary

REMEMBER:

1. Statements are more helpful if they are . . .
   - Specific rather than general. "You bumped my cup." rather than "You never watch where you're going."
   - Tentative rather than absolute. "You seem unconcerned about Jimmy." rather than "You don't give a darn about Jimmy and never will."
   - Informing rather than ordering. "I hadn't finished yet." rather than "Stop interrupting me."
2. The least helpful kinds of statements are those that sound as if they are information about the other person but are really expressions of your own feelings coming out as . . .
   - Judgments about the other. "You never pay any attention."
   - Name-calling, trait labeling. "You're a phony." "You're too rude."
   - Accusations, imputing undesirable motives to the other. "You enjoy putting people down." "You always have to be in the center of attention."
   - Commands and orders. "Stop laughing." "Don't talk so much."
   - Sarcasm. "You always look on the bright side of things, don't you?" (when the opposite is meant)
3. The most helpful kinds of information about yourself and your reactions are . . .
   - Behavior descriptions: reporting the specific acts of the other that affect you.
     "You cut in before I had finished my sentence."
   - Describing your own feelings:
     "I feel blue." "I feel relieved about what you said."

   You should try to describe your feelings in such a way that they are seen as temporary and capable of change rather than as permanent attitudes. For example: "At this point, I'm very annoyed with you." rather than "I dislike you and I always will."

G. Description of Feelings and Behavior

Directions:

Read each situation and the "You" message. Then write a clear "I" message in the third column. A clear "I" message is a statement in which you specify the feeling(s) you own which have been stimulated in you and the behavior of the person in the situation. You may wish to review the three ways of describing feelings.

	Situation	"You" Message	"I" Message
1.	Individual keeps interrupting at your meeting, making it hard for you and others to talk.	"Will you keep quiet for a while. You keep interrupting everybody."	"I feel _____ when you _____."
2.	Individual comes to class about 10 minutes late several times a week.	"Why can't you get here on time like everybody else?"	
3.	Individual keeps postponing writing a report you asked him to do.	"Quit stalling around. You'd better have that report to me by Friday."	
4.	You need to make an assignment that everybody hates to do.	"Knowing how much all of you like to give reports, here's another one for you to do."	
5.	An individual who is generally irresponsible, shows signs of genuine improvement.	"You turned out to be pretty dependable after all."	
6.	Several individuals have been loudly joking and disturbing the class.	"You two are acting like a couple of spoiled babies."	
7.	Test scores are generally higher for the entire class.	"You are all improving, but could still do a lot better."	

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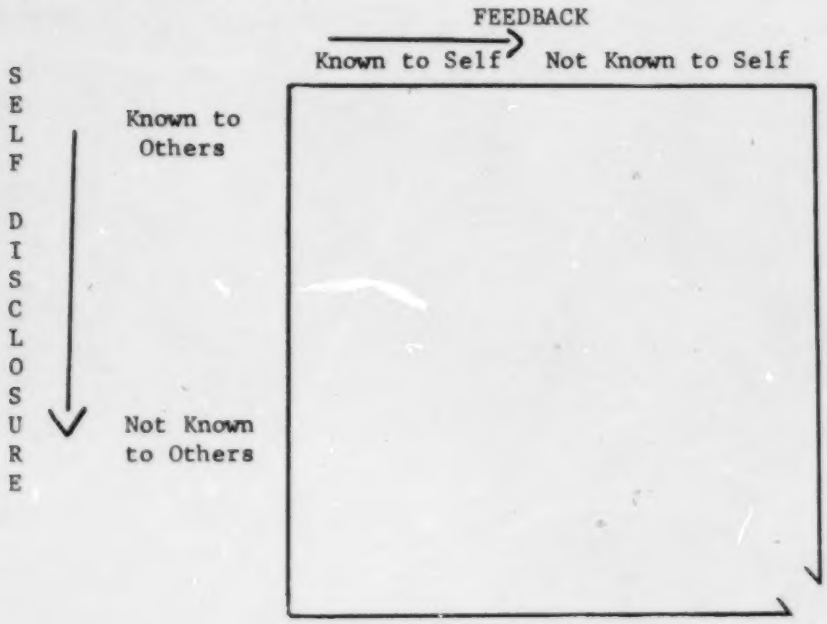
Answers: Check each "I" message to see if . . .

1. "I", "me", or "my" are used.
2. You specified some kind of feeling by name, simile, action urge or figure of speech.
3. You described nonjudgmentally behavior which was observable to all.

H. The Johari Window

Chart your own Johari Window as you feel it is with someone or with a specific group.



1. List some things you could do to enlarge your Arena:

   A. Self Disclosure
      1. _____
      2. _____
      3. _____
      4. _____

   B. Soliciting Feedback
      1. _____
      2. _____
      3. _____
      4. _____

2. Develop an <u>action plan</u> for some of the activities you listed, including when and with whom.

I. Description of Feelings

Put a "D" before each sentence below that conveys feeling by describing the speaker's emotional state.

Put an "N" before each sentence that conveys feeling but does not describe or identify the speaker's emotional state.

Discussion of responses is on the following pages. Most of the answers provide the rationale for the correct responses, as well as many of the usual pitfalls in describing feelings.

1. (___) a. Shut up! Not another word out of you!
   (___) b. I'm really annoyed by what you just said.

2. (___) a. Can't you see I'm busy? Get out!
   (___) b. I'm beginning to resent your constant interruptions.
   (___) c. You have no consideration for anybody else's feelings. You're completely selfish.

3. (___) a. I feel discouraged because of some things that happened today.
   (___) b. This has been an upsetting day.

4. (___) a. You're a wonderful person.
   (___) b. I really like you.

5. (___) a. I feel comfortable and free to be myself when I'm around you.
   (___) b. We all feel you're a wonderful person.
   (___) c. Everybody likes you.

6. (___) a. If things don't improve around here, I'll look for a new job.
   (___) b. Did you ever hear of such a lousy outfit as this is?
   (___) c. I'm afraid to admit that I need help with my work.

7. (___) a. This is a very poor exercise.
   (___) b. I feel this is a very poor exercise.
   (___) c. I'm confused, frustrated and annoyed by this exercise.

8. (___) a. I feel inadequate when teaching that particular subject.
   (___) b. I am inadequate in teaching that particular subject.

9. (___) a. I am a failure; I'll never amount to anything.
   (___) b. That teacher is awful. He didn't teach me anything.
   (___) c. I'm depressed and discouraged because I did so poorly on that test.

10. (___) a. I feel lonely and isolated in my group.
    (___) b. For all the attention anybody pays to me I might as well not be in my group!
    (___) c. I feel that nobody in my group cares whether I am there or not.

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From Interpersonal Communications, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, Portland, Oregon, 1972.

Item 1: Expression a...N. Commands such as these convey strong emotion without describing what kinds of feeling evoked the commands.

Expression b...D. The Speaker conveys his feeling by describing himself as annoyed. Thus, the statement not only expresses feeling; it also names the feeling.

Item 2: Expression a...N. Strong feeling is conveyed by the question and accompanying command, "Get out!" but the feeling itself is not described

Expression c...N. The speaker makes charges and accusations about the other. The accusations certainly convey strong negative feelings. However, because the feelings are not identified we do not know whether the accusations stem from anger, disappointment or hurt feelings.

Item 3: Expression a...D. Describes the speaker as feeling discouraged.

Expression b...N. Conveys negative feelings without describing what they are. The statement appears to be about the kind of day it was when, in fact, it is an expression of the way the speaker is feeling. We cannot tell from this expression whether the speaker is feeling depressed, annoyed, lonely, humiliated or rejected.

Item 4: Expression a...N. This sentence states a value judgment. It conveys positive feelings toward the other without describing what they are. Does the speaker like the other, respect him, enjoy him, love him, or what? The expression does not tell us.

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Expression b...D. The speaker conveys positive feeling by describing it as liking for the other.

Item 5: Expression a...D. A clear and specific description of how the speaker feels when around the other person.

Expression b...N. Although this conveys positive feeling toward the other, it does not say that the speaker feels this way. To be a description of feeling, the statement should use, "I", "me", "my", or "mine" to make clear the feelings are in the speaker. Secondly, "you're a wonderful person" is a value judgment which does not specify what feeling is behind it. (See Item 4.a)

Expression c...N. The statement is not about the speaker and his feelings but refers to everybody. It is true that a feeling is named in the statement, but the speaker does not make clear the feeling is in him. A description of feeling must contain "I", "me", "my", or "mine".

> Note how much more personal and warm you feel when another says to you that <u>he</u> likes you rather than <u>everybody</u> likes you. Do you find it more difficult to tell another, "I like you" or "Everybody likes you"?

Item 6: Expression a...N. Conveys negative feelings about the organization without describing them. Talks about the condition of things without describing them. Talks about the condition of things in this orgainization and not about the speaker's inner state.

Expression b...N. A rhetorical question that expresses a negative value judgment about the organization. It certainly conveys some kind of negative feeling, but does not describe what it is.

Expression c...D. A clear description of how the speaker feels in relation to his job. He feels afraid.

> Expressions a and b are attacks or criticisms of the organization that could result from the kind of fear described in c. Notice expressions that convey anger turn out to result from fear. Many expressions of anger result from fear, hurt feelings, disappointment or loneliness; but because the basic feelings are not described, the other person does not understand the speaker's true feelings.

Item 7: Expression a...N. This statement expresses a negative value judgment. It conveys some kind of negative feelings without describing them.

Expression b...N. Although the speaker begins by saying, "I feel..." he does not then tell what he is feeling. Instead, he passes a negative value judgment on the exercise. Note that merely tacking the words "I feel" on the front of a sentence does not turn it into a description of feeling. People often say "I feel" when they mean "I think" or "I believe." For example, "I feel the Red Sox will win." or "I feel it will rain tomorrow."

Expression c...D. The speaker specifies that he feels confused, frustrated and annoyed. He describes his feelings, but does not evaluate the exercise itself.

> Although we can disagree with value judgments expressed by another person, we should not deny that he feels whatever he feels. If Joe says the exercise is poor and Jill says it is good, an argument may ensue about which it "really" is. However, if Joe says he was frustrated by the exercise and Jill says she was pleased and stimulated by it, no argument should follow. Each person's reaction is what it is. Of course, discussion about what causes each to feel as he does may provide important information about each person and about the exercise itself.
>
> Many persons who say they are unaware of what they feel, habitually express value judgments about others without recognizing that they are thereby expressing positive or negative feelings.

Item 8: Expression a...D. Conveys feeling by describing the feeling as one of inadequacy.

Expression b...N. Careful! This sounds much the same as a. However, it really says the person is inadequate. The person labels himself as inadequate. True, he conveys negative feelings about himself, but he does not describe them.

This subtle difference was introduced because many people confuse feeling inadequate with being inadequate. A person may feel inadequate when teaching a certain subject and yet do an excellent job of it. Likewise, a person may feel adequate and competent in a subject and perform poorly.

One sign of emotional maturity may be when a person functions adequately while feeling inadequate. He does not let the feelings prevent him from doing the best he can because he knows the difference between feelings and performance.

Item 9: Expression a...N. Another example of the subtle distinction introduced in Item 8. The speaker is conveying strong negative feelings about himself ("I am a failure."). The statement does not describe his feelings, however.

Expression b...N. Instead of taking it out on himself, the speaker blames the teacher. His value judgment conveys negative feelings, but it does not describe what the speaker feels.

Expression c...D. Conveys feeling by describing the speaker's emotional state as depressed and discouraged.

Expressions a and c illustrate the important difference between labelling oneself and describing one's feelings. Feelings can and do change. To say that I am now depressed and discouraged does not imply that I will or must always feel the same. However, if I label myself as a failure, if I truly think of myself as a failure, I increase the probability that I will act like a failure.

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One girl stated this important insight for herself this way, "I always thought I was a shy person. Now I have discovered that I am not shy, although at times I feel shy." No longer did she keep herself from trying new things she wanted by reminding herself that she was too shy.

Item 10: Expression a...D. Conveys feelings by describing the speaker as feeling lonely and isolated.

Expression b...N. Conveys negative feelings without telling whether the speaker feels angry, lonely, disappointed, hurt or what.

Expression c...N. Because it begins with "I feel" this kind of expression is often thought to describe the speaker's feelings. Notice, hoever, that the last part of the sentence really tells what the speaker assumes the others in the group feel about him and not what the speaker feels.

Expression c and a relate to each other as follows; "Because I believe or assume that nobody in my group cares whether I am there or not, I feel lonely and isolated."

APPENDIX

On Listening . . . Differently

There has been a tremendous amount of literature on the art of listening. Marriage counselors and psychologists stress its' importance in interpersonal relationships. Business consultants emphasize it in problem solving, conflict resolution and effective manager-employee relationships. Educators have long stressed listening to understand problems in children and to project a sense of self-worth to the speaker. Each group has developed and/or adopted listening techniques which they feel best fits their profession.

But with all of the emphasis, naturalness and spontaneity seemed to have been set aside for expressions which are mistaken for good listening techniques. Phrases like, "Did I understand you to say . . .", and "what I think I heard you say is . . .", have been overused and misused enough to cause a number of people to become uneasy. There is no question as to the value of listening. Really understanding what is being said, listening past the words and looking at a statement from the perspective of the speaker is a powerful tool which always enhances the relationship between speaker and listener. Good listening is allowing, understanding, accepting and empathizing. It doesn't mean agreeing, but it does imply knowing what the real issue is before disagreeing.

There are a variety of techniques for listening and almost all of them contain two key components. The first is a positive listening attitude, a sincere desire to want to listen, to try to understand the statements from the view of the speaker.

The second component is for the listener to, in some way, let the speaker know what he/she understood so the speaker can verify the message was received clearly. It is in this last component most miscommunication takes place. The usual procedure is to assume what you heard was the intended message, react to it, only to later find out that what you heard was something different than what the speaker intended. In complex, highly emotional messages it becomes critical to check the accuracy of the statement received. This article will attempt to show some creative, personal ways for checking the message's accuracy.

The importance of a listening attitude--the first component--cannot be understated. If listening doesn't stem from a sincere desire to want to listen, then no listening will take place. It is important to remember that everyone is transparent. You can't pretend to be listening when you're not, you can't pretend to be interested when you're not, etc. We have all been in the situation where it was evident someone wasn't listening or interested, even if all of the proper non-verbal mannerisms (nodding, facial expression, leaning forward, etc.) were being used. It seems that as soon as we learn we're transparent and vulnerable when we pretend, then we can begin to be honest with ourselves, as well as with the people around us. If we can't listen, tell the message-sender we can't listen. Say it gently, but clearly, that now isn't the best time for us to hear. Likewise, when we decide to listen, really put ourselves into listening. Good listening takes energy so be ready to expend the necessary energy.

The second component--that of verifying the message--has some problem areas common to many of us. One is knowing the barriers which keep you from hearing the reality of the speaker's message and then, overcoming those barriers. Some common barriers are preoccupation, value differences and maintaining power/control. One of the best techniques for getting past those barriers is to listen "outside" of yourself. This is the ability to step out of your mental set, your values, your preoccupations and try to understand the message from the perspective of the sender. Ask yourself, "What is this person really saying? What values or attitudes is he/she expressing? How does he/she perceive the reality of this situation?" The secret of listening outside of yourself is to place yourself in a mental attitude of hearing the message from the perspective of the sender. While you can never completely do this, you can get closer to understanding the intended message. After you've "heard" the message, you can step back inside yourself and: (1) let the sender know what you heard, and (2) respond with your ideas, answers, etc., based on your perspectives and your sense of reality. Listening from the other's perspective doesn't mean agreeing, but it does mean really understanding before disagreeing.

Once you have overcome some of the barriers and you have a sincere desire to want to listen, here are some of the techniques to active listening

without sounding like a broken record. I suggest the following five as starters. There are many other ways, and as long as they meet the two criteria of sincerity and verifying the message received, they will be effective.

1. Agreement/Disagreement

   Joe: This is the second time we have had this problem. I think we should go to the Board and get a policy statement.

   Frank: Joe, I disagree that we should go for a policy statement now. It seems to me that we should discuss it further and come up with a recommendation before we ask the Board to decide.

   OR

   Frank: I agree Joe, I think it's high time we got the Board to make a solid statement on this issue so we can settle it once and for all.

Both statements by Frank are paraphrases or accuracy checks, because he repeats to Joe the message he received in the midst of his response. Joe knows that Frank understood him and that Frank disagrees or agrees with his statement.

2. Summarize

   Jane: I believe it is time for this country to elect a woman for president. There are many capable women in the arena of politics today who would be well qualified to hold this position. The inspiration of a woman president would encourage young females to study government and politics in school and pursue a career of government service, thereby creating a more balanced legislative body.

   Lisa: It seems, Jane, that the major advantages of electing a woman president are (1) more female students inspired to study political sciences and (2) a more balanced legislature in the future. I feel there are some other ways to achieve those same goals sooner than would be politically feasible for a woman to be elected to this position.

Lisa's answer was to summarize the major points of Jane's statement, then to make her own statement. Jane may feel the need to express more of the advantages, etc., but she knows that Lisa heard and agrees with the advantages but differs in how to attain these goals.

3. Synthesis

Fred: I think the most important thing we administrators can do for Central High School in this time of unrest is to be ready to move quickly against any infraction of the rules. We need to administer justice swiftly and fairly. The first thing to do is plan a process to deal with a potential problem.

Sue: Fred, it seems to me that we should be more active in trying to prevent these problems rather than spending all of our energy reacting to crisis situations.

Sue's response analyzes Fred's statement and Sue disagrees with the basis of Fred's plan. In her answer she paraphrases Fred and adds her perspective. Fred knows that Sue sees his plan as a reactive plan and, hopefully, sees her idea of a preventative plan.

4. Example

Sam: Since this is supposed to be a participative system, I think we teachers should be involved in decisions which affect the children. The administration should do the rest.

Tom: So we should have input into curriculum and student discipline, but not have to be bothered with ordering pencils, paper and supplies and the upkeep of the building unless these conditions adversely affect the students? Right?

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Tom's strategy is to show he understood by taking Sam's general statement and giving an example of how it would apply. Tom also gives Sam a chance to respond and make any other clarifications he sees as necessary. Sam knows Tom understood by his examples.

5. Action

Jon: Boy, am I mad! I just received my notice that I may not be reemployed as a teacher in September. And after all of the things I've done for this school--the Year-Book, the theater productions and all, you'd think they would recognize dedication!

Ted: Hey Jon, that's really too bad. Here, come on in and sit down. I'll get us some coffee and we can talk.

Ted's action is saying, "I see you're really upset and this is how I treat upset people." Jon's message has reached Ted and he is reacting to show he understood. Jon may say, "Well, that's o.k. Ted, but I have another class and I guess I knew that this might happen, etc." If this were Jon's

reaction, he is probably saying that he appreciates Ted's paraphrase but it wasn't accurate.

In any event, actions can be used as a paraphrase as long as the sender knows that you have understood the message.

It seems, then, that really effective listening is any means verbal or nonverbal which tells the sender of a message what that message meant to the receiver. It differs from "mirroring" or "parroting" since the receiver of the message has to ask himself/herself, "What did the message mean to me?" Good listening involves the listener as well as the sender. It assumes dialogue. The secret is to be sure that both sender and receiver are comfortable with the processes they use. To listen to complex messages or high emotion messages without checking to see if you understood correctly is to be vulnerable for misunderstanding.

As you begin to develop your own style as a good listener, you will be amazed at the amount of time you save, at how quickly you get to the real problem when problem solving, and at how pleasant people around you will feel when they feel you're listening to them. One of the delightful side benefits of good listening is the positive affirmation you nonverbally send--saying, "You are of value, your opinions and/or feelings are important to me." In an honest, sincere, listening situation both receiver and sender feel reinforced and better for the conversation. 43

The five examples used are beginning steps of helping you break out of habit patterns you may have erroneously associated with good listening. There are many other ways and the best ways are those you develop which fit your individual style. Be creative and maybe most importantly, be comfortable with your listening techniques. It is when you are comfortable, and sincerely interested in the message-sender, that you are at your "listening best." You will be amazed (and delighted) at what you will "hear!"

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